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SETH GOVIND DAS AND ASHOKA-A CRITICAL STUDY

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

One of the most significant and well-known figures in the context of Indian independence resistance is "Seth Govind Das". Voters elected Govind Das in Berar and Central Provinces to serve as their representatives in the Assembly. He spoke during the Assembly's discussions of the national anthem, the national language, and the ban on cow slaughter in the Indian political and social contexts. Das began participating in the Indian National Congress in 1920. Over time, he has participated in several movements, including the Quit India campaign, the Non-Cooperation movement, the Civil Disobedience movement, and protests around the Simon Commission. As a result, he has faced repeated detention by the British police in the country. "Seth Govind Das" joined the All India Congress Committee in 1920 and engaged with in Tripuri Congress Working Committee in 1939. He was elected there as Speaker pro tem by the President for the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Lok Sabhas before the speaker was formally elected. He also gave the other Lok Sabha representatives their oaths of office. From 1957 until he died in 1974, he constantly represented Jabalpur in the Indian Parliament from the first to the fifth Lok Sabha. The following literary paper will establish a critical study of one of his outstanding works, Ashok Natak or Ashoka, and evaluate his contribution to Hindi literature during the freedom movement while also highlighting his other associated involvement with Indian Politics and the freedom movement.

1.2 Background

On the occasion of Vijayadashami in 1896, Seth Govinddas, a member of the famous Maheshwari commercial dynasty of Jabalpur, was born to Raja Gokuldas in the city of Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh. Sethji was raised in a royal family and received an excellent education. During his time at home, he mastered both the Hindi and English languages. His residence was primarily associated with a spiritual setting (Gundimeda *et al.*, 2018). In addition to attending performances like Raas Leelas and those of the Vallabh Sampradaya, he sometimes used to appreciate religious festivals when he was a little child while residing with his family. This is where he found the inspiration for the plays he composed during his era of proficiency.

Seth Govinddas was indeed an adherent of the Gandhian philosophy. He was passionate about literature and actively engaged in the nation's independence movement, which resulted in multiple jail terms for him. He exclusively produced several works while he was sentenced to prison. He was elected to the position of Member of Parliament in 1947, and he retained it for the remainder of his life. He supported the designation of Hindi as the country's official tongue (Srivastava and Kumar, 2018). He contributed to Hindi since it was not just one language used throughout the enormous country of India but was also the vocabulary of the independence movement. In literature, Seth Govind Das was greatly influenced by Shakespeare. The well-known plays by Shakespeare, including "Romeo and Juliet," "As You Like It," "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," and "Winter's Tale" served as the inspiration for Sethji's works like "Surendra-Sundari," "Krishnakamini," "Honhar," and "Vain Suspicion." written in fiction. These novels served as the foundation for Sethji's literary career in this manner. He developed a greater interest in poetry during the same period. He wrote a poem called "Vanasur-Parabhav" and used poetry in his novels.

1.3 Research Rationale

Regarding the rationale for this result, it can be stated that this research will help justify it. The ***"Ashoka"*** play of Seth Govind is one of the essential works in Hindi literature, but there are very few studies on it. This research will highlight the play of Seth Govind Das, and it will also be taken further into Govind Das's life events and his literary-based works. The Ashoka play is not so well known in Indian literature; one of the vital aspects of this research is that this will find all the information available on the Ashoka of Govind Das. This research will fill all the knowledge gaps open on this topic and give the readers knowledge and an overview of the play by Seth Govind Das. Further, this research will study the historical evidence of Ashoka and construct a historical perspective of the play by Seth Govind Das and how it creates history.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

When it comes to the aims and objectives of this research, the first and major aspect of the aim is that this research will able to provide data and information on the play, Ashoka by Seth Govind Das. this research will be studying that how Ashoka, the play is aligned according to the history real-life events regarding Ashoka. Further, this research aims to give an overview and analyze both Seth Govind Das and his play. The objectives of this research are mentioned below.

- To study the aspect of the Ashoka play.
- To get information on the present, an elaborate study on the play.
- To achieve some information regarding the political works of Seth Govind Das.
- To draw a historical construction of the play.

1.5 Research Significance

The research aims to develop a critical literature analysis concerning the work of Seth Govind Das and understand his contribution to Indian Hindi literature. The primary significance that the study is an important document for the play of Seth Govind Das, Ashoka. This work will especially go through the alignment of the original life events of Ashoka. So this will justify the importance and analysis of Seth Govind Das's literary creation. This research will conduct the significance of the topic. The amount of relevance lies in the information on the topic, which will be further discussed in this research. This research will carry the significance of the subject matter in an informative way and the research is a fair study on "Ashoka", the play by Govind Das.

This research will be using all the important real-life incidents in Ashoka and put the elements of the play Ashoka. So there will be a proper alignment of the historical incidences in the contemporary era of Ashoka's emperorship in the literature account of Ashoka Natak by Seth Govind Das.

1.6 Research Structure

In terms of the research structure of this research, this will be using research on information available based on the information and data available on the subject of this research which is Ashoka by Seth Govind Das. So it can be stated that the research structure of this study will be going through all the information and the analyze them. First, two kinds of data have been taken in this research. First of all, the real-life information on the base of the life of Ashoka are then aligned and analyzed with the play of Seth Govind Das. All the work taken here is processed by a single structural format; introduction, primary information, the discussions, and finally, the summarization of the whole piece. The structure of this research is quite simple and has avoided any hard structural base so that all the information can be aligned and placed following the information available for the study to be completed. Further, the structure of this study follows a conventional method of studying a particular subject.

1.7 Summary

Govind Das has essentially captured every authentic facet of Ashoka's life. Govind Das claims that the drama is focused on the life of Ashoka when describing the play's historical context in the prologue. The character of Kanchanmala, Kunal's wife, is this drama's sole wholly made-up component. Ashoka's 28-year rule is demonstrated in the drama (263 BC–235 BC). Except Ashoka's family life and personal difficulties, which are more emphasized than the portrayal of the Kalinga War, he has not omitted any key event from his life from the play Ashoka. On it, there are minuscule imperfections. . The work of Seth Govind Das is one of the most significant historical works based on the life of Ashoka; it may be said further in terms of summarising this research study. Govind Das has emphasized more on household matters, such as Ashoka marrying Tishyaraksha, his former maid. This union negatively impacted his home life in many ways. Each story that is discussed in the play comments on the actual historical occurrence and, in turn, helps to organize the information about the occurrence into a more enticing and literary structure

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the "Seth Govind Das."

"Seth Govind Das" is one of the most important and well-known characters in

the scenario of Indian independence activism (Wasiq, 2022). He was also a parliamentarian. "Seth Govind Das" was born into a family where his family members were loyal to the British family. Still, ***from his early childhood days, "Seth Govind Das" was into the independence movement.*** His zeal was for making India free from British rule. "Seth Govind Das" is known for being one of the figures in the history of Indian independence (Bepari, 2022).

Further, in 1920, he was with Gandhi ji in his Non-Co-operation Movement against the British government. He stood with Gandhi ji in his movements against the British government. "Seth Govind Das" was jailed several times; according to the reports, "Seth Govind Das" was jailed five times in eight years (Tewari, 2019). ***He became a member of the All India Congress Committee in the years of 1920. He served on the Congress Working Committee of the Tripuri Session of the Congress in 1939. Along with his political career, he was the President of the Mahakoshal P.C.C. during 1928-34 and 1946-1957, and the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee in 1957.***

Further, "Seth Govind Das" was also a member of the Indian Parliament. "Seth Govind Das" ***represented Jabalpur in the Indian Parliament from 1957 to 1974*** (Pai, 2020). He died in 1974. ***He was appointed Speaker (before the formal election of a speaker) by the President for the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Lok Sabha and administered the oath of office to all the rest of the Lok Sabha members. "Seth Govind Das" got Padma Bhushan in 1961*** (Wasiq, 2022).

Along with his political career, Das was also an author of Hindi. "Seth Govind Das" has several writings, including plays, travel stories, and dramas. For his writing, ***"Damoh",*** he was jailed for eight months by the British. Further, "Seth Govind Das" had several more writings, such as ***"Prakash"*** (social), ***"Kartavya"*** (mythological), ***"Navras"*** (philosophical), and a ***"Spardha"*** (one-act play). All of these are revolutionary writings from ***"Seth Govind Das"***; all of these were written by him while he was in jail. Further, he had other writings, including a hundred plays, a novel ***"Indu-mati"***, five travel books, a three-volume autobiography, and four biographies, mainly in Hindi.

2.2 Main works of "Seth Govind Das."

Distinguished lawmaker and independence fighter "Seth Govind Das" lived from October 16 1896, to June 18 1974 (Wasiq, 2022). He was a member of the renowned Maheshwari mercantile family, descended from Raja Gokuldas of Jabalpur. Sevaram Khushalchand's banking firm one of the "great firms" as T.A. (Awasthy, 2022). Timberg referred to them and served as the family's first client. During his political career, he was involved with several political aspects and events, making him one of the most important people in India regarding independence and post-independence.

Coming of Satyagrah Inquiry Committee to Jubbulpore

All Congress committees received the questionnaire the committee had created and were asked to respond. Tours of every district and interactions with party employees came next.

However, because he had cordial ties to the British government, this caused issues for ***"Diwan Bahadur Jeevan Das ji"***. When an anti-British government committee was staying at his townhouse, Sir Frank Sly, the governor of Central Province at the time, phoned Jeevan Das ji to voice his worry. The problem was addressed diplomatically by Jeevan Das ji, who said, ***"Well, Sir, Govind Das has as much right upon Govind Bhavan as I have."*** It is beyond doubt on my mind part to forbid any of his visitors from staying at Govind Bhavan. Sir Sly, however, was not someone who was quickly abandoned. It appears that both the father and the son are engaging in political games, he said.

As President of the Regional Congress committee

Govind Das ji's family was threatened by a financial crisis (Singh, 2021)***. Even though there had been a problem since 1913, it got worse due to Govind Das ji's 1925 election to the Council of State and the consequent rise in his social life expenses.***

Since Govind Das ji was now in charge of the entire Congress party, the situation deteriorated. The launch of publications under the name Lokmat also occurred at this time. For the position of Chief Editor, ***"Pt. Dwarika Prasad Mishra"*** was given responsibility. It gained acceptance over time and eventually became the people's preferred choice.

Govind Das ji's ascent to new leadership during this time was another notable development. Sagar native and former President of the regional congress committee was ***"Keshavramchandra Khandekar"***. Govind Das ji was chosen to be a committee member during the 1926 election (Chandrachud, 2020). The following year, ***Govind Das' election as President was proposed by Khandekar and approved by everybody. "Lakshman Singh Chauhan" and "Pt. Dwarika Prasad Mishra"*** was named secretary by Govinddasji.

Civil Disobedience movement:

On March 12, 1930, Gandhiji organized the renowned Dandi March to launch the movement (Rather, 2022)***. From "Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi"***, a village on the ***"Gujarat"*** coast, ***Gandhiji travelled over 375 kilometres on foot with 78 carefully chosen followers***. He breached the salt prohibition on April 6 as a representation of the Indian people's rejection of living under British laws and, by extension, under British authority.

The Hindustani Central Province was renamed Mahakoshal during this time, an important milestone in the Central Province (Sarangi and Pai, 2020). An All India Congress Committee meeting was held in Ahmedabad while Gandhiji was on the Dandi March. There was a positive energy permeating the area. The articles in ***"Lokmat"*** focused heavily on this.

The Political council laid the plan for the Satyagraha in the Mahakoshal area. Since the province was not on the cost, ***"Namak Satyagraha"*** could not be carried out; therefore, ***"Jungle Satyagraha"*** was chalked out (Xaxa and Devy, 2021). Pt. Ravishankar Shukla took responsibility for the program in Chattisgarh, while Govind Das ji took responsibility for Jubbulpore.

Organizing public gatherings and reading books that the British government forbids were decided by consensus. The results of this action were positive. A turning moment in the Civil Disobedience was the speech by "Seth Govind Das" ji, who criticized his great-grandfather Seth Kushalchand ji's support of the British administration during the 1857 insurrection. By attracting the British government's notice, this action. They issued arrest warrants.

Civil Disobedience Movement in Jabalpur

A nationwide strike was observed on the day of Gandhiji's arrest (Balagurusamy and Nagaraj, 2022). This strike was also seen in Jabalpur. An announcement was made to hold a public gathering at ***"Tilak Bhumi"*** at 8 pm in order to wish Gandhiji well following his arrest. Thousands of people showed up despite the severe weather.

However, 15 to 20 minutes before the meeting started, a sizable Police detachment and a number of horse riders arrived. In contrast to his usual punctuality, Govind Das ji, and Pt. Dwarika Prasad Mishra arrived at the meeting location a little early this time. A large number of Inspectors and the City Kotwal were present.

"Lakshmi Singh Chauhan", the President of the City Congress Committee, Govind Das ji, and Mishra ji decided to find out why there were so many police officers present. Mishra ji frequently met with City Kotwal because he served as the "Jabalpur Municipality" chairman. When he went to City Kotwal to find out why they were there, he was told that they had been there with government instructions to arrest the leaders as soon as the meeting started and proclaim the entire program to be illegal. They were given the go-ahead to end the session and use lathi.



Figure: The historical public meeting at Tilak Bhumi, Jabalpur

(Source: https://www.gokuldas.com/sg/index.php?sg=4)

It was strangely proposed and accepted to conduct the meeting's business without verbal exchanges. ***"Lakshmi Singh Chauhan"*** ordered the ***"Jhanda" Gayan*** after settling onto his position at the dias. After that, he gave the directive to conduct the meeting's business without speaking. For three nights and four days, the meeting's business was handled by the leaders in this way.

Even the general public participated in significant numbers despite the severe winter weather. ***After three days, the leaders decided to give a speech at 5 o'clock because they could see the crowd's enthusiasm waning.***

The first to take the microphone was Govind Das ji. He claimed that during the 1930 Satyagraha, ***"I decided to enter prison. I'll give my life up this time, though. Arousal ought to remain whether or not I'm present. My farmers shouldn't be required to pay taxes to my father"***. Additionally, he pledged to

renounce claims to the patriarchal estate. He will leave Gokuldas Palace after his release from prison.

A City Magistrate ruled the meeting illegal and ordered the leaders' arrests as Govind Das ji finished his remarks. The public was to be scattered with a lathi charge in five minutes. ***Govinddasji, "Pt. Dwarika Prasad Mishra", "Thakur Lakshmi Singh Chauhan", and "Baba Hiralal" were present as a result.***

2.3 Critical review of the play Ashoka and its contribution to Hindi literature

Along with his political career, Seth Govind Das had other aspects of his life. He was also one of the well-known authors. While he was jailed several times started to write his early works. He wrote several mythological and historical dramas. ***"Vikas", "Sinhal Dweep", "Vijay Beli", "Shashi Gupt", "Bhikshu Se Grihastha", "Harsh", "Kuleenta", "Shershah", "Vishwasghat"***. These are the ones that are considered the historical and mythological dramas of ***Hindi Literature*** from Seth Govind Das. In 1917, Sethji's first play 'Vishwa Prem' was published. It was also staged. Taking inspiration from the famous foreign playwright Ibsen, you radically changed your writing. He wrote he plays in the symbolist style using new techniques. 'Vikas' is his dream play. 'Navaras' is his theatrical form. Mono-drama in Hindi was written by Sethji first.

Among his other works, the play ***"Ashoka"*** is one of the most well-known and famous plays wholly dedicated to King Ashok's life and transformation. In the context of the play Ashoka, Govind Das claims that the drama is centred on the life of Ashoka while discussing the play's historical context in the prologue. Except for Kunal's wife, Kanchanmala, none of this drama's events, characters, or identities is made up. The 28-year reign of Ashoka is covered by the drama (263 BC–235 BC) (Jaffrelot, 2020). Dr Bhandarkar's Ashoka, the Cambridge History of India (Part-I), Dr Radhamukund Mukherjee's Man and Thought in Ancient India, Dr Benimadhav's Ashoka and his inscriptions, Gundopant's "Ashoka Aur Uske Lekh," and Dr Harishchandra's Ashoka are among the historical works that went into the creation of Ashoka by Seth Govind Das. By reflecting on Ashoka's life and his sincere metamorphosis into a true king, Govind Das accomplished this approach. The play Ashoka depicts how he changed from being "the ruthless Ashoka further into pious Ashoka." Govind Das may have chosen to write about Ashoka because it is not easy to go through the process of converting from one religious doctrine to another. Ashoka's courage and regret for his violence inspired Govind Das to defend and justify the transformation through his artistic creation. He experienced a significant change in his life that made him well-known worldwide. He gained prominence worldwide because of the real-life creative account of the transformation expressed by Ashoka. Govind Das examines Shri H.G. Wells's remarks in the prologue to his book "Ashoka" regarding Ashoka.

There seem to be 33 different versions of Ashoka's inscriptions, each with a varied length, significance, and availability (Singh, 2021). One of India's greatest rulers, Ashoka, converted his country into what is now known as Religious India. Although he started as a Hindu monarch, he eventually became a Buddhist. This occurred following his invasion of Kalinga (now Orissa) when 1,50,000 people were captured, 1,00,000 people were killed, and many times that many perished. Ashoka realized that "war" not only ravages and devastated the battleground but also claimed the lives of many other innocent civilians, damaging their thoughts and livelihoods for a very long period. Ashoka's first action to disseminate "Dharma" was to go on a pilgrimage (approximately two years after the Kalinga War). His journey continues with a stop at the revered site of Sambodhi, the final resting place of Gautam Buddha. All this historical evidence has been mentioned and highlighted in the play Ashoka by Seth Govind Das. Every account mentioned in the play reflects on the historical incident and provides a construction of the historical data in a more attractive and literary format.

In essence, Govind Das has depicted every real aspect of Ashoka's existence. No significant event from Ashoka's life has been left out of the play Ashoka, except his family and personal struggles, which are highlighted more than the depiction of the Kalinga War. There are minor flaws in it. Ashoka marrying Tishyaraksha, his former maid, is one domestic matter on which Govind Das has placed more emphasis. This union had numerous detrimental effects on his home life. A history-related open play by Govind Das embodies Gandhi Ji's philosophy of 'Ahimsa,' or the road of nonviolence, which led to India's independence. In both plays, the playwright had legitimate works that earned them praise upon their return.

The entirety of Marxist influence over India and Indians was manifested in Seth Govind Das's personality and his works in the Hindi literature context. In addition to the United States, Marxist groups had sought to rule in India and establish their ideologies, the baseline ideas of which have been prominent in the pieces of literature generated by Govind Das in the contemporary era, expressing his support for the communist rule. On the other side, the nation's slavish copying of European philosophy also manifested in literary works during that era. Between two power sources fighting for governance and authority in India, the importance of Hindi had already begun to lose its uniqueness. Seth Ji had started to sense in his consciousness that it was an assault on Indian culture, namely the impact on Indian thought and life cycle. ***"Neither communist nor European ideology is what we need,"*** he had cautioned his fellow citizens of the country. The main objective for his statement of caution was that the Indians should cultivate their very own philosophy in this land in their very own language, Hindi. It will come to the people as they think and materialize the objective with time. Only if the people are liberated from the grasp of English dominance and the influence of other languages and cultures is when India will advance. British history has been thoroughly misrepresented and tweaked to provide the Indians with falsified history education and knowledge. The British made an unfounded effort to demonstrate that the Indian Aryans were not the country's native population. The only connection they have to European or other cultures is that India welcomed them and provided primary education, language, writing, and a social man's way of life. To state that Seth Govind Das was a full-fledged Indian Politician, it can be said that Maa Bharti resided in the soul that drove him to establish and glorify Hindi literature in the Indian literary context, denouncing the influences from external sources trying to dominate and overpower the entire rich Indian and Hindi literary cultures.

3. Summary

One of the most significant and well-known figures in the story of Indian freedom campaigners is Seth Govind Das. He also served in the legislature. When explaining the play's historical setting in the prologue, Govind Das asserts that the drama is focused on the life of Ashoka. This drama's only entirely made-up elements are Kanchanmala, Kunal's wife. The drama covers Ashoka's 28-year rule (263 BC–235 BC). The historical sources that Seth Govind Das used to create Ashoka include Dr Bhandarkar's Ashoka, the Cambridge History of India (Part-I), Dr Radhamukund Mukherjee's Man and Thought in Ancient India, Dr Benimadhav's Ashoka and his inscriptions, Gundopant's "Ashoka Aur Uske Lekh," and Dr Harishchandra's Ashoka. Govind Das was inspired by Ashoka's bravery and regret for his brutality to protect and justify the shift via his artistic work. He underwent a massive transition in his life that helped him become well-known around the globe.

Seth Govind Das's personality and his creative output in the context of Hindi literature displayed the full extent of Marxist influence over India and Indians. Along with the United States, Marxist groups sought to establish their ideologies in India. Govind Das, who supported communist rule, produced literature in the modern era that reflected these ideologies' foundational ideas. On the other hand, the nation's slavish imitation of European ideas was also visible in that period's literary production.

The primary goal of his warning was to encourage the Indians to develop their ideology in this country in their most popular language, Hindi. With time, it will materialize as the people's thoughts, and goals do. In an attempt to show that the Indian Aryans were not the nation's indigenous inhabitants, the British made many erroneous claims. The fact that India embraced them and supplied them with an elementary education, a language to write in, and a style of living fit for a social man is the only link they have to European or other cultures.

On the way back, he halts at Sambodhi, the revered location where Gautam Buddha is said to have died. Seth Govind Das' play Ashoka featured all of these historical pieces of proof, which were also highlighted. Each narrative brought up in the play comments on the actual historical event and, in essence, builds the information about the event into a more appealing and literary structure.

Further, in terms of summarising this research study, it can be further stated that the work of Seth Govind Das is one of the most important constructive historical writings based on the life of Ashoka. The play consisted of all the events related to Ashoka's life, and Govind Das has essentially captured every authentic facet of Ashoka's life. Except for Ashoka's family life and personal difficulties, which are more emphasized than the depiction of the Kalinga War, he has not omitted any key event from his life from the play Ashoka.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this research study will have helped in understanding the literary brilliance and the historical connotation expressed in the play Ashoka by Seth Govind Das in the 20th-century Hindi literature context. A critical analysis of one of his notable works, Ashok Natak or Ashoka, has been established in the following literary essay. It has also evaluated his contribution to Hindi literature during the freedom movement and highlighted his other related involvements with Indian politics and the freedom movement. Seth Govind Das was a fully-fledged Indian politician, and it can be argued that Maa Bharti, who resided in his soul, inspired him to establish and elevate Hindi literature within the context of Indian literature while denouncing attempts by outside influences to dominate and eclipse the rich literary traditions of both India and Hindi.

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